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STATEMENT OF
JAMES P. WADE, JR.
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Before the
Subcommittee on International Security
and Scientific Affairs
Committee on International Relations
House of Representatives

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Mr. Chairman, and members of the Subcommittee on International Security and Scientific Affairs.

I appreciate the opportunity to present the views of the Department of Defense on the three general categories of resolutions that are the subject of this hearing: renunciation of "first use of nuclear weapons;" renunciation of so-called "first strike;" and declaration of intention not to threaten or use nuclear weapons against certain non-nuclear states. I would like to treat each of these in turn, specifically addressing the issues involved, current USG policy, and our position on the resolutions being discussed. After that, I will be pleased to answer your questions.

The term "first use" is associated with the initial use of nuclear weapons before such weapons have been employed by an aggressor. As you all know, the US would not contemplate the use of nuclear weapons in other than the gravest of circumstances. *cf. Helms: 1969--*

OK We and our Allies devote substantial resources to sustaining and improving our conventional weapons capability, so that we may avoid having to threaten the use of nuclear weapons. It is our policy to maintain conventional forces sufficient to defend against a non-nuclear attack on NATO or on other Allies. Yet we believe we must maintain forces including both non-nuclear and nuclear-capable to deter enemy first use of nuclear weapons and which can respond to a wide range of contingencies including failure of the conventional defense. We maintain these capabilities so that our adversaries perceive that we have not only the capability but the will to use nuclear weapons if necessary. The will and the capability are

essential ingredients of deterrence, necessary both to give caution to any enemy considering an attack and to preserve the solidarity of our alliances. Our nuclear capable forces thus complement US Allied conventional forces. We hope these forces together will deter any adversary from committing aggression against the US or its Allies. We enhance deterrence by making clear, in advance, that we will apply whatever force, conventional or nuclear, that is needed to defeat the attack.

We want the attacker to realize the enormous risks he is taking. If the attacker could be certain that the US would not use nuclear weapons, it would remove a major complication in his tactical planning on what forces he needs and remove a major uncertainty about the risks attendant to aggression. It would not be in the best interest of US security to remove this uncertainty from any adversary's planning.

Over the years, we have given repeated assurances to our Allies that nuclear weapons would be used in their defense, if needed to assure their survival. The deterrent posture of the combined US and Allied forces in NATO is dependent on the flexible response doctrine that whatever force is necessary will be applied to repel and defeat an attack from the Soviet-Warsaw Pact forces, including the first use of nuclear weapons should the situation dictate. Altering the doctrine to exclude first use could remove the underpinning which has been allowing us to proceed in confidence to improve our conventional forces.

A denial of the option of first use would tell all of our Allies that we would be willing to see them ^{EVEN} suffer a conventional defeat without coming

*This is the essential message
to be conveyed — about nuclear weapons.
It would permit us, and require us, to explain WHY.*

YES

to their aid with nuclear weapons. It could convince them that they must acquire their own nuclear weapons with all the attendant implications for nuclear proliferation.

It is our judgment that renunciation of the first use of nuclear weapons would be a dangerous step. We oppose those resolutions which propose that the US renounce the first use of nuclear weapons.

Turning now to the second concept, renunciation of so-called "first strike." This is an ambiguous term which has caused much confusion. A more precise term would be "disarming first strike" in the context of the resolution, referring to an attack intended to disarm an adversary by destroying his ability to strike the US with nuclear forces. As the President has stated, we are not developing such a first strike capability, nor is it possible for either side to do so. The nuclear forces of both super powers are today so extensive and elements as a whole are sufficiently survivable that neither side for the foreseeable future should hope to be able to achieve the capability of being able to eliminate the retaliatory capability of the other.

Although our policy is not to develop a disarming first strike capability or attempt a disarming first strike, a resolution renouncing "the strategy of a nuclear first strike" would not lead to greater security for us, and could lead to serious misunderstanding by our Allies regardless of the specific language. To avoid confusion the term "first strike" would have to be explicitly related to the disarming first strike associated with the strategic forces, as discussed here.

The third concept we are addressing today concerns a resolution on non-use against certain non-nuclear states - those which are parties to the NPT and not engaged in aggression in concert with a nuclear power. US policy today recognizes the limited impact of US nuclear weapons on such non-nuclear states. If the United States were to adopt the non-use policy set forth in this resolution, however, a country which feared an overwhelming conventional attack from a neighboring country might be motivated to pursue a nuclear weapons capability for its own defense.

This potential loss in international stability does not appear to be offset by any significant enhancement of the security of non-nuclear weapon states party to the NPT. Their most pressing security concern is usually the possibility of conventional armed conflict with neighbors. To the extent that nuclear weapons are feared, it is often the fear that non-nuclear weapon state rivals will develop such weapons, upsetting regional power relationships. The nuclear ambitions of neighboring states in a region are the fundamental concern of other states, not the activities of the nuclear powers. We question whether a statement of policy by the United States as envisioned in this resolution would alleviate the genuine security concerns that have at times played a critical role in a non-nuclear weapon state's choice not to join the NPT. Therefore, we doubt such a statement of policy would serve as any real incentive for states to adhere to the NPT.

I have discussed our understanding of the issues involved as they relate to each category of the proposed resolutions that this Committee

has before it. The members should give very careful consideration not only to the other substantive issues raised but also the question of preserving the President's authority to take responsible action in the interest of this country's national security.

Thank you. Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement.